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Ministry of Advanced Education

LOAN PROGRAM EXPANDED TO MEET TRADES TRAINING DEMAND

VICTORIA – In order to help meet the growing demand for trades training, the B.C. student loan forgiveness program has been expanded to include technology education teachers, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

"We're continuing to build on the success of B.C.'s loan forgiveness program to make sure that students in programs for which there is a high demand for graduates can have their student loan debt reduced," said Coell. "By forgiving student loans, we are encouraging more people with a trades background to become certified teachers and help meet the growing demand for trades training in B.C.'s high schools."

Technology education teachers work in school districts across the province, delivering Industry Training Authority trades programs such as auto repair, welding, carpentry and electrical. School districts and other industry training stakeholders in B.C. have said they need more trades people to become involved in the education of secondary students. The Province is also trying to attract more high school students to pursue a trades career through programs like the Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training – or ACE IT – program.

Students who graduate on or after July 1, 2007 as technical education teachers are eligible for the loan forgiveness program. Their B.C. student loan debts will be reduced by one third for each of the three years they work in a high demand area of the province.

"Each school district in B.C. was visited by either the Premier or me, and we certainly heard that some areas have difficulty recruiting specialized teachers," said Education Minister Shirley Bond. "Providing loan forgiveness to technology education teachers who choose to practise in underserved areas will give districts one more tool to recruit the teachers they need to provide the educational choices their students want."

Since the loan forgiveness program started in 2001, 12 professions have been included in fields such as medicine, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Recently, teachers for the visually impaired, teachers for the deaf and hard of hearing, and school psychologists were also included.

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